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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8156
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2904
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2060
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5974
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2375
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 2007

In Today's Papers

Sezer Vetoes Constitutional Reforms, will Call Referendum
All papers report President Sezer on Monday vetoed a plan that would cut the time needed to hold a constitutional referendum to 45 days from 120 days. Sezer submitted the proposal on direct election of the president to referendum after the parliament overrode an earlier presidential veto. The ruling AKP government wants to hold a referendum on constitutional reforms on July 22, the same day as the parliamentary election. Turkish Parliament, now in recess ahead of the election, can override the veto by approving the bill a second time unchanged. However, Prime Minister Erdogan has left off the election list at least half of his ruling AKP MPs, making it difficult to rally enough votes to pass the law. If the Constitutional Court rejects the annulment request, the referendum will be held on October 15, after a new parliament elects a new president.

Hudson Institute's 'Doomsday Scenarios' Cause Unease in Turkey
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report the continuing reaction of Turkish officials to a weekend brain-storming at the Hudson Institute in Washington that discussed 'disaster scenarios' for Turkey, including the assassination of former Constitutional Court chairwoman Tulay Tugcu, a PKK suicide attack in downtown Istanbul, and a major Turkish military incursion into northern Iraq. Tugcu expressed sadness over the inclusion of her name in such scenarios, stressing she expects the Turkish officials who were reportedly there to make a statement.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul rejected reports that he said Turkish generals should have walked out of the controversial meeting. Prime Minister Erdogan said the Hudson Institute gathering was 'utter nonsense.' Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc said Turkish participants in the meeting should have notified their supervisors about the proceeding of the meeting, and asked the Turkish General Staff (TGS) for a statement.

Zeyno Baran, Turkey expert at the Hudson Institute, told Turkish

televisions Monday that scenarios regarding Turkish politics 'were not discussed' at the meeting, stressing the session aimed to avoid a rising of tensions between Turkey and the US because of the terrorist PKK. Baran also apologized to Tulay Tugcu for the misunderstanding caused because of warped press reports.

Editorial Commentary on Hudson Institute Turkey Session
Hasan Cemal commented in the mainstream Milliyet (6/19): "What was discussed at the Hudson Institute meeting was not a plan, but a scenario. Knowing that these think-tank organizations' main responsibility is brain-storming to produce scenarios, I wasn't concerned about it at all. And I just can't understand why everybody got so upset about the scenario while there are so many terrorist incidents, political murders, assassinations taking place in Turkey. During the last year or more, as the presidential election process began, there have been countless terrorist incidents and violent actions. Moreover, haven't scenarios about cross-border operations into Northern Iraq became routine discussions in Turkey? What disturbed me more than the Hudson Institute scenarios was the hand grenade found in a house in Istanbul, in which some retired military personnel who are members of the Kuvayi Milliye association were involved. The government should deal with these hand grenades for the sake of the future of the democratic state of law, rather than hypothetical scenarios."

Maliki to Visit Turkey in June
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report
Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has accepted an invitation from his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan to visit Ankara to discuss the security situation in northern Iraq. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet claims during a Sunday meeting with Derya Kanbay, Turkey's ambassador to Baghdad, Maliki did not raise the issue of

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the PKK and rather covertly criticized the AKP for extending backing to the radical Sunni groups in Iraq. The Iraqi PM did not give a clear response to the invitation, and is watching the reaction of the Kurds, according to Cumhuriyet. The Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak says Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) sources believe Maliki may visit Turkey on June 30.

Turkish Prosecutor Launches Investigation against Barzani
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report a prosecutor in Diyarbakir launched an investigation into Masoud Barzani, the president of the regional Kurdish administration in northern Iraq, for violating Turkish Penal Code Article 77 by promoting crimes against humanity, providing logistic support to a terrorist organization, and attempting to disrupt the unity of the state and nation. The 'Ataturk Thought Association' (ADD,) a Turkish nationalist organization, has applied to the prosecutors in Diyarbakir, calling for the seizure of assets, including property and bank accounts, that Barzani and his family may own in Turkey.

Poll: AKP, CHP-DSP, MHP to Enter Parliament
Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carries a public opinion survey commissioned by Raymond James, a brokerage firm in Istanbul, which predicts that in general elections, the AKP will receive 45.3 percent of votes with CHP-DSP alliance 20.2 and MHP 16.1, after distribution of 17.5 percent of indecisive voters. The poll expects 40 independent candidates to win seats in the parliament. The survey was conducted by Konda Co. on June 9-10 in 32 provinces with 3,605 people.

Editorial Commentary on the Middle East Situation
Ilter Turkmen observed in the mainstream Hurriyet (6/19): "Nightmare scenarios are being realized speedily in the Middle East. The latest drama in the Middle East is the division of Palestine. The developments in Gaza hold danger for the whole region. Egypt and Jordan are concerned about the HAMAS presence at their border. There are the clashes between the Lebanese army and a terrorist organization settled in a Palestinian immigrant camp. Unfortunately, the innocent Palestinians in the camp are suffering from these clashes. The situation in Iraq is worse than ever. The US troop increases did not improve the situation. On the contrary,

sectarian clashes increased, with more lives lost and the danger for a divided Iraq increased. During a problematic period in the Middle East, Turkey's stable democracy has a vital importance for the US and the EU. That is why the US and the EU should realize the serious danger PKK terrorism poses for Turkish democracy. "

TV Highlights
NTV

Domestic News

- Turkish security forces killed four PKK terrorists in separate operations in eastern provinces of Siirt and Sirnak on Monday.
- Energy Minister Hilmi Guler has failed to make a deal with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan for transport of natural gas to European markets via Turkey.
- A Turkish Cypriot parliamentary delegation visits London for meetings in the British Parliament.
- Volume of trade between Turkey and China is expected to amount to USD 50 billion.

International News

- Tens of thousands of Iraqis flee to Jordan and Syria every month.

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- The Turkish Foreign Ministry has condemned the Taliban suicide bomb attack on a police bus which killed at least 35 in Kabul.
 - Despite the efforts of the Cypriot government, the number of applications to the Turkish Cypriot commission for property disputes increased.
 - Tony Blair has strongly defended intervening in Iraq for the final time as British Prime Minister before parliament.
- WILSON